

CCT'S TIMBER TRADE FROM CAMEROON TO EUROPE

A TEST CASE FOR EUTR'S DUE
DILIGENCE REQUIREMENT

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SUMMARY

The EU Timber Regulation (EUTR)¹, became applicable on 03 March 2013. Companies placing timber on the EU market are legally required to have a robust due diligence system to minimize the risk that timber they are trading comes from illegal sources.

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Greenpeace has been investigating timber placed on the EU market since then, especially from high risk regions such as the Amazon or Congo Basin. This case study shows the result of research into some specific timber flows from Cameroon to the EU.

The following conclusion can be drawn:

Cameroon is a high risk country:

- Progress on fighting illegal logging in Cameroon has stalled in the last years and the political will to institute change is apparently lacking.
- One indicator of the lack of progress is the delay in implementing the voluntary partnership agreement (VPA) on Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) signed with the EU.
- There is currently no Independent Observer active to check the legality of logging operations, while corruption² continues to be a dominant feature of Cameroon's forest sector.
- The independent auditor checking the progress of the VPA, concluded that there is not a single logging permit currently complying with the criteria stipulated in the VPA legality grid and none of the existing logging titles can be considered fully compliant with the laws of Cameroon.
- The relative importance of timber that is produced and exported from logging concessions is declining while the wood volumes from forest conversion are expected to rise significantly. Conversion timber now increasingly comes from "Vente de Coupe" (VC) logging permits, these are forest areas with a maximum of 2,500 ha where no management plan is required. These titles are frequently a door-opener for illegal logging practices (see textbox on page 6).

The company Compagnie de Commerce et de Transport (CCT) is trading timber from several companies that are involved in illegal logging operations

- Many of the companies supplying CCT are operating in VCs
- Greenpeace investigation revealed that three CCT suppliers that are logging in VCs appear to be logging outside the legal boundaries and in a fourth operation there are clear indications for violations that we urge the Cameroonian government to investigate

EU operators are placing CCT timber on the EU market

- Preliminary Greenpeace research reveals that EU operators are sourcing timber from CCT and placing it on the EU market, timber is found in the Netherlands, Belgium and Spain.
- CCT's supply chain is contaminated with illegal timber and therefore can't be trusted.
- Given the prevalence of illegal logging, governance failures, high corruption rates and systemic flaws in the timber control system of Cameroon, official documents alone are not enough to ascertain the legality of the timber.
- In order to comply with their due diligence obligation, operators in Europe are required to implement risk mitigation measures when risks are identified.
- In case the risk can't be reduced to a negligible level, operators must refrain from placing the timber on the market.

Greenpeace therefore urges that the following measures are taken:

- For competent authorities in Belgium and the Netherlands: investigate operators that are trading CCT timber on the internal market and carry out checks to verify whether the companies identified as operators in the case at issue:
 - (i) have a due diligence system in place, and
 - (ii) have correctly carried out such due diligence so as to comply with the requirements set out in Articles 4 and 6 EUTR.

- In case a failure to comply with the due diligence requirements is ascertained, we urge the competent authorities to fine the operators in accordance with Article 19 EUTR and the other relevant EU and national law provisions.
- For operators in Europe: consider all Cameroon wood as “high risk” in the context of the EUTR’s due diligence obligation and cancel all contracts with CCT until it is possible to check legality of that wood in a reliable manner.
- For the government of Spain: Immediately comply with its obligations under EU laws and implement the EUTR.

1. CAMEROON: DESTRUCTIVE LOGGING AND FOREST CONVERSION ON THE RISE

Cameroon's forests cover some 20 million hectares, about 40 % of the national territory³. A large part of Cameroon's forests in the south of the country belong to the Congo Basin, the 2nd largest rainforest block in the world, after the Amazon Basin.

Figures on annual deforestation rates in Cameroon strongly vary amongst sources. According to the FAO⁴, the annual net rate of deforestation has remained more or less constant in Cameroon, at one percent, for the period 1990-2015, which has meant a decline in forest area from 22 million hectares to some 20 million hectares. Other recent sources mention a much lower deforestation rate for Cameroon⁵. However, such deforestation studies do not fully reflect the scale of forest fragmentation and forest degradation that occurs in Cameroon due to widespread industrial logging operations. Unsustainable and illegal logging has been identified as one of the main drivers of forest degradation in Cameroon⁶.

Illegal logging in Cameroon has been subject of high level political debate since the mid 90s. Many donor agencies have invested considerable funding in helping to curb illegal logging.

British think tank Chatham House reported progress in the fight against illegal logging in Cameroon in 2010⁷ and claimed that illegal logging levels had dropped by 50-75 % in the last decade. A more recent study⁸ by the same institute (2015) assessing progress on fighting illegal logging in Cameroon concluded that the fight against illegal logging had stalled and that corruption⁹ continues to be a dominant feature of Cameroon's forest sector. The political will to institute change is apparently lacking.

CONVERSION TIMBER ON THE RISE

There seems to be a broad consensus that deforestation rates are likely to increase in years to come¹⁰. Cameroon's 2035 Economic Growth and Employment Strategy¹¹ contains plans for a wide array of projects including large infrastructure investments (hydro dams, road & railway construction, port extension, mines, oil and gas projects and agro-industrial plantations). Many of those projects are located in densely forested areas, often even in areas of High Conservation Value where threatened wildlife species

such as the forest elephant and the western lowland gorilla occur.

For example the construction of the Mekin Hydro dam and the creation of a large scale rubber plantation by Hevea Sud near the Dja reserve – a World Heritage Site – will cause forest clearance of thousands of hectares of tropical rainforest¹².

As a result of the deforestation caused by those recent industrial projects and plantation development, the relative importance of timber that is produced and exported from logging concessions (forest areas that are set aside for long term timber production based on management plans) is declining. While the volume of wood that results from forest clearance for industrial projects, now broadly known as conversion timber, is expected to rise significantly¹³.

LACK OF TRANSPARENCY

For several large scale deforestation projects in Cameroon, the allocation of logging permits does not appear to happen in compliance with legal procedures (see textbox for further information). Some of those titles appear to have been allocated in a non-transparent manner, often to members of the political elite and some of those projects also serve as a front for illegal logging operations¹⁴. Geographical maps that relate to forest conversion titles are rarely publicly available or may simply not exist¹⁵. Because detailed maps of the planned deforestation projects are usually not made available, it is very difficult to control whether or not the logging companies take advantage of this lack of transparency to cut a lot more forest than what is required for the project in question. The problem in Cameroon (and elsewhere in the Congo Basin) is that these types of permits that are used for deforestation are frequently abused to cover-up large scale illegal logging operations that have little to do with the development project that is used to justify those logging operations¹⁶.

In 2013, Greenpeace exposed¹⁷ how SGSOC, the Cameroon subsidiary of the American firm Herakles Farms took over a little known logging company (Uniprovince) to which a Vente de Coupe (VC) was awarded to clear the forest in a part of SGSOC's palm oil concession. Greenpeace exposed

how Uniprovince's title was used to launder the wood that SGSOC had already cut illegally before the plantation company had obtained its land lease. Furthermore, Uniprovince's VC was not allocated via a public auction procedure, even though this is required for such titles¹⁸. Despite the well documented illegalities related to Uniprovince, logs from this VC were bought by companies in China and exports of these logs continue¹⁹.

More VCs have recently also been allocated in areas where hydro dams are being constructed. SFID, the Cameroonian subsidiary of the French logging company Rougier, was awarded 8 VCs in July 2014 to clear the forests²⁰ in an area that will be flooded once the Lom Pangar hydro dam will be filled. Only one of those (VC 10 04 301) is currently listed on the March 2015 list of attributed logging titles.

At least a part of the recently allocated VCs are associated with industrial projects for which forests need to be cleared. For example the VCs allocated to the South Forest Company -SFC – allocated in the Bengbis area in

Cameroon's Southern province seem allocated with the purpose to cut the tropical hardwood that would otherwise be lost once the forest will be flooded by the filling of the Mekin dam (an estimated 30,000 hectares of forest). The geographical maps for these VC operations are however not publicly available (absent from WRI interactive forest atlas for Cameroon) which makes it very difficult for any organization to monitor whether or not these logging operations are not also illegally logging elsewhere under the cover of those development projects.

Another example are the VCs that have recently been allocated in the vicinity of Kribi where some 20,000 hectares of forest are being converted to develop the current port into a massive deep seaport and surrounding industrial areas. In the absence of a publication of geographical maps of these logging titles, monitoring is complicated even though there is a real risk that these logging permits are abused in order to log in a much wider area.

Illegal logging in Vente de Coupe

“Vente de coupe” also known under the less frequently used English term ‘Sales of Standing Volumes’ are georeferenced permits that allow logging for up to three years for a maximum area of 2,500 hectares. A forest area that is intended for allocation as a VC must first be presented (via public notice) to the surrounding communities, enabling them to request a community forest over the same area²¹. If this right is not used, the Ministry of Forestry launches a call for tenders. The applicants are invited to visit the site in order to better prepare their bid. The bids submitted to MINFOF are then analyzed by the Inter-ministerial Committee for Permit Allocations and an Independent Monitor of Permit Allocations, among others, attends the meeting. The VCs are then allocated as identified and located in the call for tenders and public notice²².

VCs de coupe are “cut and run” titles; typically exploited very rapidly in a highly destructive manner as no management plan is legally required, and are frequently a door-opener for illegal logging practices. Such practices have been extensively documented by all three organizations²³ that acted as Independent Observer in Cameroon and highlighted systemic problems with illegal logging in relation to VCs.

The most frequently cited infringement related to VCs are logging outside the boundaries of the VC and fraudulently declaring this illegal wood as originating from the legal logging title (“laundering the timber”). This out of boundary logging is often linked to exaggerated (fictitious) inventories that indicate much larger commercial timber stocks than the actual potential of the VC. The corresponding volumetric authorizations and paperwork issued by MINFOF then enables the companies to fell significant volumes of timber outside the VC boundaries illegally.

Illegal activities related to VCs also occur well before the actual logging starts due to widespread corruption in the VC allocation process. Even companies that are known to be involved in recent illegal activities, frequently win new VCs. [while technically VCs have to be allocated via a public tender process after which the best bidder is selected based on technical and financial criteria]. Sometimes logging companies even arrange for a modification or even a complete relocation of the VC after the title was granted; in complicity with the authorities.

Despite the well-known legality problems with VCs and the recent proliferation of VC allocations, there has hardly been any independent monitoring of VC logging activities in the past years. In addition to the monitoring in the forest, also independent observation of the public auctioning process is provided. Unfortunately those reports are not being made public. There are however many indications of irregular allocations of VC permits. A 2011 report²⁴ of Cameroon's national anti-corruption commission (CONAC) for example indicated widespread corruption in the allocation of VCs. According to the Corruption Perception Index published by Transparency International, Cameroon is ranked in the lower end of the league, in 2014 Cameroon was ranked 136 out of 174 countries²⁵.

In July 2014 The European Community Forest Platform (ECFP), a coalition of civil society organisations came up with a detailed list²⁶ of issues and questions for the Cameroon Ministry of Forestry relating to the conversion timber issue but more than a year later, there has not been any official response to their queries. In a statement issued on 20 May the (renamed) Community and Forest Platform (CFP)²⁷, warned that timber from forest conversion is increasing significantly and could become the main supply source of timber in Cameroon. The CFP recommended that the FLEGT VPA implementation should ensure that procedures to grant these logging titles (exploitation permits) are clarified urgently and that the laws governing such granting are respected. There has been no formal response to the list of issues presented and their concerns have not been addressed yet. This goes against the principles of good governance, which among other things demands responsiveness, accountability, openness and transparency from the authorities

2. POLITICAL RESPONSE ON ILLEGAL LOGGING

In 2003, the European Union (EU) adopted its Action Plan on Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT)²⁸ with the aims to eradicate illegal logging and the associated illegal trade and improve forest governance which should ultimately lead to the sustainable management of forests in tropical countries. The EU Timber Regulation and the Voluntary Partnership Agreements between the EU and partner countries are among the tools identified in the FLEGT action plan to tackle illegal logging and its related trade.

VOLUNTARY PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE EU AND CAMEROON (VPA)

In May 2009, Cameroon signed a Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA)²⁹ with the European Union for Forest Law Enforcement Government and Trade (FLEGT) in Cameroon's timber sector³⁰. The agreement came into force on 01 December 2011³¹.

The VPA is a legally binding trade agreement that sets out the commitments and action that the Cameroonian authorities will take to eradicate illegal logging and the associated illegal trade, and improve forest governance and promote the sustainable management of forests.

Cameroon's VPA agreement aims to ensure that all timber the country is commercializing is verified as legal; not only the timber exported to the European Union³². To reach these ambitious objectives, Cameroon is currently setting up a Timber Legality Assurance System (TLAS) (based on a legality grid, a system to ensure the traceability of the wood and control mechanisms to ensure compliance with the law. VPA implementation has stalled in Cameroon and the issuance of credible FLEGT licenses seem to be far off.

In a contribution to the evaluation process of the FLEGT action plan, Cameroon civil society organizations flagged that the VPA-FLEGT process may have paradoxically caused an increase of illegal logging to maximize profits before the legality verification system becomes effective; they also stressed that illegal logging practices were exacerbated because the fight against corruption is inadequate and there is an absence of dissuasive sanctions. That forest officials are often complicit in illegal logging is also stressed as part of the problem³³.

INDEPENDENT MONITORING OF CAMEROON'S FOREST SECTOR

Effective Independent Forest Monitoring (IFM) is widely considered essential to the credibility of the VPAs. Cameroon was the first African country to implement an Independent Forest Monitoring project, three years before the FLEGT action plan was adopted by the EU. It was a condition for World Bank support for the country and a tool to improve forest governance. IFM projects in Cameroon were initially carried out by the Independent Observers Global Witness (2000-2005) and Resource Extraction Monitoring (REM 2006-2009). Since 2010 till 2013, The IFM project was managed by the Belgian firm AGRECO in collaboration with the local NGO Cameroon Environmental Watch.

Unfortunately, active political backing by the donor community (World Bank, EU and other bilateral donors) for Cameroon's IFM project has declined over time. The Terms of References for Independent Observers in Cameroon have gradually become more detailed but also curbed the observer's right to act independently. AGRECO-CEW's remit (which is largely determined by the Cameroon government and the EU) has been quite different from that of previous observers and has been much less effective³⁴.

The Cameroonian Center for Environment and development (CED), has warned that the preparation of the VPA implementation is reason for concern³⁵. Reform of Cameroon's legal framework is a precondition for a credible VPA implementation, particularly to make sure that the rights of local communities are protected and that the wood considered legal is also socially acceptable.

The forest code is currently being revised³⁶. It is unclear to what extent the reform of the forest code is streamlining the VPA's requirements and supporting its objectives. For example, the current draft forest law revision actually could make forest conversion easier since it may eliminate the requirement to integrate a new stretch of forest into the permanent forest estate to compensate for the loss of forest from conversion for agriculture (or other purposes). This change could undermine efforts for sustainable forest management and open the door for large scale deforestation³⁷.

INDEPENDENT AUDIT OF THE FLEGT PROCESS IN CAMEROON

As stipulated in the VPA, an independent auditor is appointed by the government (in agreement with the EU) to check that the Legality Assurance System in the VPA is working as it should. The role of the Independent Auditor in Cameroon differs from the role of the pre-existing Independent Forest Monitor of Cameroon's forest sector. In the context of the VPA an independent auditor is to perform an evaluation of the FLEGT licensing framework in Cameroon and in European countries. The independent audit component is independent of the national forest-sector institutions of the partner country. The independent audit is meant to confer legitimacy on the FLEGT certificate framework by verifying that all aspects of the Legality Verification System (LVS) of a partner country function as planned.

In Cameroon, the Independent Audit began in 2012 while the LVS was still in the process of being established. Initially the Terms of Reference for the audit stipulated that the auditors were to verify whether the LVS was sufficiently robust, whether issued FLEGT licenses were credible and compliant with all required criteria, and whether measures in Europe were adequate to allow for free circulation of licensed wood. Due to delays and since no FLEGT licenses had been delivered, the Terms of Reference were modified in February 2014 and the specific objectives changed to the following:

- “1. Evaluate the conformity of documents pertaining to the process of logging-title award
2. Study the current status of confiscated wood
3. Support the implementation of the LVS by additional evaluations [...]”

Dated 2 August 2014, the Independent Auditor's report on title award was only recently publicly reported upon³⁸. The outcomes of the audit are very disturbing and conclude that not a single logging title in Cameroon can be considered legal when the currently established legality criteria are applied:

- For many logging permits, the documents required to verify the legality are unavailable
- Fundamental problems exist at the government level regarding the archiving of relevant documents
- Not a single logging concession (FMU, Forest Management Unit) fully respects all criteria for such concession stipulated in the VPA legality grid
- Not a single company VC logging title can be considered to be entirely legally compliant
- Not a single community forestry title respects the criteria of the legality grid for the allocation of community forests.

The consequences of such findings are clear: Cameroon is not ready at all to deliver legality certificates any time soon. If the legality grid that Cameroon has developed in the context of the VPA were to be used as a parameter for legality, there is no wood currently exported that can be considered fully legal. It remains unclear what the next steps will be for the Cameroon Government and the European Union but Greenpeace fears that the legality grid will be weakened to make compliance more feasible.

THE EUTR – EUROPEAN TIMBER REGULATION

The EU Timber Regulation (EUTR)³⁹, came into effect on 03 March 2013. This legislation was adopted late, in 2010, and only became applicable some 10 years after the publication of the FLEGT action plan. Under the EUTR, it is illegal for companies to place illegally logged timber and timber products on the EU market. Companies, defined as ‘operators’ under the legislation, are responsible for assessing their suppliers and taking appropriate steps to prevent illegal timber and timber products from entering their supply chain – referred to as due diligence. Downstream purchasers, known as traders, must keep records of their transactions, so that any potentially illegal timber can be traced back to the company that imported it. EU Member States are expected to set up appropriate legal and administrative structures to enforce the regulations and, where necessary, impose sanctions on companies that disregard them.

When importing from a high-risk country or region, operators are expected to take even greater care to avoid illegal timber. In particular, in producer countries where illegal logging and corruption in the forest sector are rife, as is the case in Cameroon, operators cannot rely solely upon official paperwork to demonstrate compliance with the law. They must seek further assurances to mitigate the risk of illegality, and should not import any timber from the supplier or country in question until the risk has been successfully reduced to a negligible level.

In the case of Cameroon, given the widespread illegal logging and corruption, the disturbing outcomes of the Independent Audit, the fact that the implementation of the VPA has stalled and the fact that there is currently no independent Observations taking place, Greenpeace believes that operators should consider all Cameroonian wood as “high risk”. They should take extra measures to avoid illegal timber, incorporating these extra measures into their risk assessments.

Each EU Member State's competent authorities should investigate its country's trade in timber from Cameroon and ensure that operators are acting correctly, in compliance with the due diligence obligations laid down in the EUTR, and are not violating the EUTR prohibition on placing illegally harvested timber on the EU market.

3. CCT - CAMEROON'S LEADING LOG EXPORTER & LAUNDERING MACHINE FOR ILLEGALLY HARVESTED WOOD

Industrial logging in Cameroon continues to be dominated by large European companies, but the company Compagnie de Commerce et de Transport (CCT) now appears to be the country's top exporter of logs with China as its main export destination. CCT's sawn timber also seems to be exported on a large scale to Europe. CCT's wood exporting activities are also illustrative for what now appears to be a broader trend in Cameroon: the changing nature of timber exports. On top of the vertically integrated logging companies that directly export their own wood, we see a growing importance of companies such as CCT and Boiscom that are locally known as "courtiers" – these are broker companies that do not have logging titles in their own name but buy up timber from logging companies in Douala before it leaves the country and then export in their own names. CCT's timber trade illustrates well the challenges timber importers are facing when importing Cameroon wood while trying to comply with their respective legislation (EUTR, the Lacey Act) that prohibits the imports of illegal wood.

In 2014, CCT was by far Cameroon's biggest log exporter. CCT's relative importance in the export of sawn timber is smaller but still significant. Most of the wood traded by CCT in 2014 comes from VC logging operation. This means that wood traded by CCT is not only coming from logging operations that are highly destructive for the environment, but also that the risk that CCT is trading illegal wood is high considering the problems with VCs mentioned above.

Indicative/non-exhaustive list of important CCT's suppliers in 2014⁴⁰

COMPAGNIE	LOGGING TITLE	LOCATION
Kieffer & cie	VC 07 03 70	Pouma
Ets La Socamba	VC 09 01 203	Djoum
Oye Compagnie	VC 08 08 210	Massondo
FEEMAM	VC 08 09 217	Akonolinga
SOFOCAM	VC 07 03 71	Pouma
SIBOIS	VC 09 01 210	Djoum
TTC	VC 08 03 180	Bikok
Hamadou Adama	VC 10 04 131	Diang
LFIS	VC 08 08 203	Messondo
Forêt Communal	FC 1484	Messamena/Mindourou
Hamadou Adama	VC 08 09 221	Akonolinga/Ayos

CCT operates a sawmill in Bonabéri near the seaport of Douala, which is locally known as the "Hazim sawmill". Many of CCT's current employees are said to be former staff of Hazim's sawmill in Lomié (east Cameroon). CCT also operates log yards in the port of Douala: one nearby the Tradex airport, and a second one in Bonabéri. Timber trucks arrive at these yards, for disposal of the timber, which is then prepared for further transport to the CCT sawmill or for export.

Greenpeace research identified that timber from at least one supplier involved in illegalities is entering the log yards in the port of Douala[FV1].

CCT'S CONNECTION TO HAZIM, A FIRM DEEPLY INVOLVED IN LARGE SCALE ILLEGAL LOGGING

CCT is based at the same address as Hazim group headquarters (BP 5908, Douala); Cameroonian tax authorities confirmed Hazim's connection to the firm. This alleged connection between CCT and Hazim has also been previously reported by the organization Resources Extraction Monitoring (REM)⁴¹, at that time the officially mandated Independent Observer of Cameroon's forest sector.

Within the Cameroonian and European timber trade, it appears common knowledge that CCT is connected to Hazim. This connection between CCT and Hazim is significant because of the notorious reputation of the Hazim group for illegal logging in Cameroon.

It is troublesome that almost four years after Cameroon's ratification of a Voluntary Partnership Agreement designed to tackle illegal logging, Cameroon's biggest log exporter appears to be linked to the country's best known illegal logging company.

Hazim's illegal logging activities in Cameroon

Fifteen years ago, Société forestière Hazim (SFH) was the focus of intense NGO campaigning against illegal logging and forestry-sector corruption. In a 2002 Greenpeace crime file "Hazim: plundering Cameroon's ancient forests"⁴²:

SFH has gained particular notoriety for its record of violating forestry laws, creating social conflicts and causing massive environmental damage. It has been repeatedly fined for its 'anarchic' logging practices and for logging outside the legal limits of its concessions as well as for logging without authorization in neighboring concessions. Yet the Cameroonian government, the donor community and the governments of importing nations have failed to tackle this serious problem. And European timber importers continue to buy Hazim's timber.

In 2002 the Ministry fined SFH 2.5 billion CFA (close to 4 million Euro) and suspended its activities for the illegal logging of 60,000 m³ in two East Region logging concessions in 2000⁴³. In 2002 the firm received additional fines totaling over 15 billion CFA (almost 23 million Euro). Hazim sued the government. In 2005 the Finance Ministry ordered the seizure of what the Independent Observer of Forestry Control claims was "a significant" number of Hazim's assets. The Ministry's rolling list of forestry-sector legal cases continues to include SFH's 16 billion CFA fine⁴⁴ information on the present status of the criminal case brought some ten years ago by the Forestry Ministry against Mr. Hazim is not publicly available⁴⁵.

CCT is based at the same address⁴⁶ as the Lebanese consulate⁴⁷. Mr. Hazim Hazim Chehade has been the Lebanese honorary consul to Douala for many years.

4. CCT'S SUPPLIERS: FOREST DESTRUCTION & DIRTY BUSINESS

Greenpeace investigated 3 suppliers of CCT. The timber from these suppliers all come from a VC which, as described earlier, are “cut and run” titles; typically exploited very rapidly in a highly destructive manner as no management plan is legally required, and are frequently a door-opener for illegal logging practices. In addition, a fourth company, which has been researched in the past, is supplying to CCT and operating in a VC.

CASE STUDY: FEEMAM (VC 08 09 217)

Company name: FEEMAM
Postal address: B.P. 14399, Yaoundé, Cameroon

A Cameroon Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife’s (MINFOF) July 2014 list of operational exploitation titles states that FEEMAM’s VC 08 09 217 (2,467 hectares, Akonolinga area, Centre region) was granted on 24 April 2013⁴⁸.

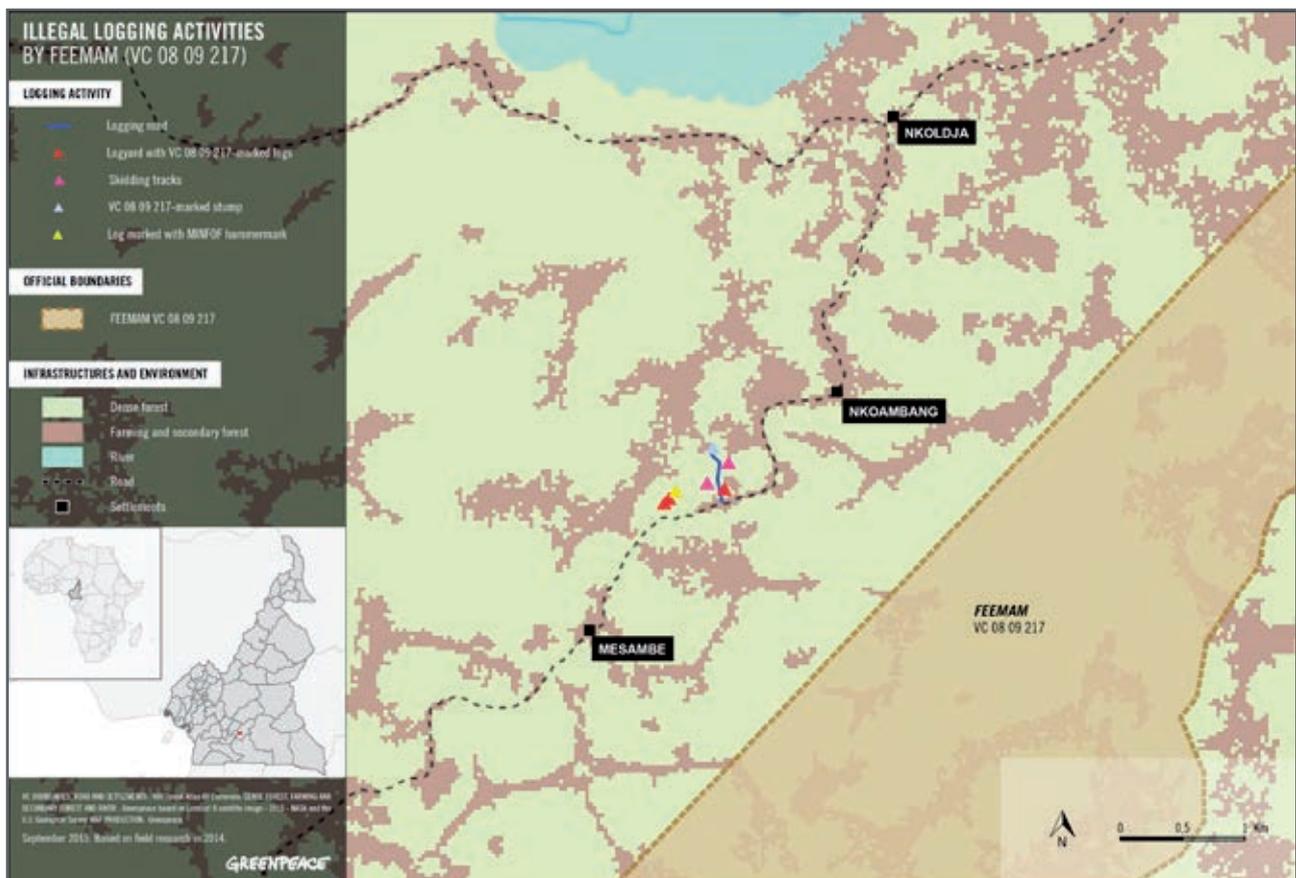
The MINFOF’s March 2015 list of granted titles mentions 2 other FEEMAM VCs⁴⁹:

VC 08 03 217, granted on 27 May 2014
(2,326 hectare, Deuk area)

VC 11 06 025, granted on 15 January 2015
(2,500 hectare, Tombel area)

FEEMAM has its own sawmill at Mbalmayo, department of Ngong et So'o⁵⁰.

Map: out-of-boundary logging by FEEMAM (VC 08 09 217)



FEEMAM has been accused of illegal logging in the past. On 4 April 2012, AGRECO, at that time the Independent Observer, organized a joint field inspection with the MINFOF's National Control Brigade to FEEMAM's VC 08 10 251 in Dzeng, Nyong-et-So'o department, Centre region⁵¹. The team found several unmarked logs and stumps and noted that the worksite register wasn't registered at the Ministry⁵². The IM recommended a fine to be imposed on FEEMAM⁵³.

In September 2013, FEEMAM was fined CFA 1,941,000 (about EUR 3,000) for the violation of technical logging norms, abandoning Ayous and Okan, and the felling of a Tali tree 15 meters from a body of water in VC 08 09 217⁵⁴.

FEEMAM was fined CFA 4,523,332 (about EUR 7,000 €) in 2015 following official infraction reports, in December 2014 and April 2015, of out-of-boundary logging of at least one unspecified VC⁵⁵.

Out-of-boundary logging related to VC 08 09 217

A Greenpeace investigation in 2014 documented out-of-boundary logging related to VC 08 09 217. Several logs and a tree stump carrying the marks of VC 08 09 217 were documented almost two kilometers outside the boundaries of VC 08 09 217 and approximately 150 meters from the road between the villages Nkoambang and Mesambe. These out-of-boundary logging operations clearly appear to be illegal and require an official investigation.

Several logs carried the MINFOF hammer mark indicating complicity of the local MINFOF authorities. The hammer mark serves as an attest that the legality of the wood is undisputed. Hammer marking should be done in the logging yard and only on wood that has previously been

Illegal logging activities by FEEMAM: unmarked logs in FEEMAM-log yard at 3°40.089'N, 12°05.968'E, - 1,84 km outside of VC 08 09 217



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marked by the company.⁵⁶ According to local sources, the MINFOF regional delegate allowed the company to hammer mark logs itself, an illegal but widely reported practice.

Local sources also reported to Greenpeace that FEEMAM paid monthly bribes to MINFOF regional delegates, guards at check-points and local chiefs.

Out-of-boundary logging is punishable by a fine of CFA 200,000 (about EUR 300) to CFA 1 million (about EUR 1,500) and/or a 1-6 month prison term⁵⁷. Violations of the Forestry Law may result in suspension, or, in the case of repeated violations, cancellation of title or logging license⁵⁸.

Illegal logging activities by FEEMAM: tree stump with VC 08 09 217-mark outside of VC 08 09 217 at 3°40.279'N, 12°06.142'E



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Illegal logging activities by FEEMAM: log with VC 08 09 217-mark and MINFOF hammer mark at 3°40.143'N, 12°06.166E - 1,7 km outside of VC 08 09 217



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CASE STUDY:
SOUTH FORESTRY COMPANY (VC 09 01 306)

Company name: South Forestry Company (SFC)
 Postal address: B.P. 382 Sangmélima, Cameroon

The Cameroon Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife (MINFOF)'s March 2015 list of granted titles, mentions 3 VC logging titles for SFC⁵⁹:

- VC 09 01 305, granted on 3 December 2012 (1,800 hectares, Bengbis)
- VC 09 01 306, granted on 3 December 2012 (1,600 hectares, Bengbis)
- VC 09 01 307, granted on 3 December 2012 (1,400 hectares, Meyomessala)

No maps of the boundaries of these VCs are publicly available⁶⁰. Therefore, it is very hard to monitor SFC's logging operations.

With logging rights to 4,800 hectares, SFC is currently the main logging company active in the Mekin hydroelectric dam project region. The 1,600 hectares VC 09 01 306 was reportedly allocated to allow for the removal of biomass from the zone to be flooded in the dam's

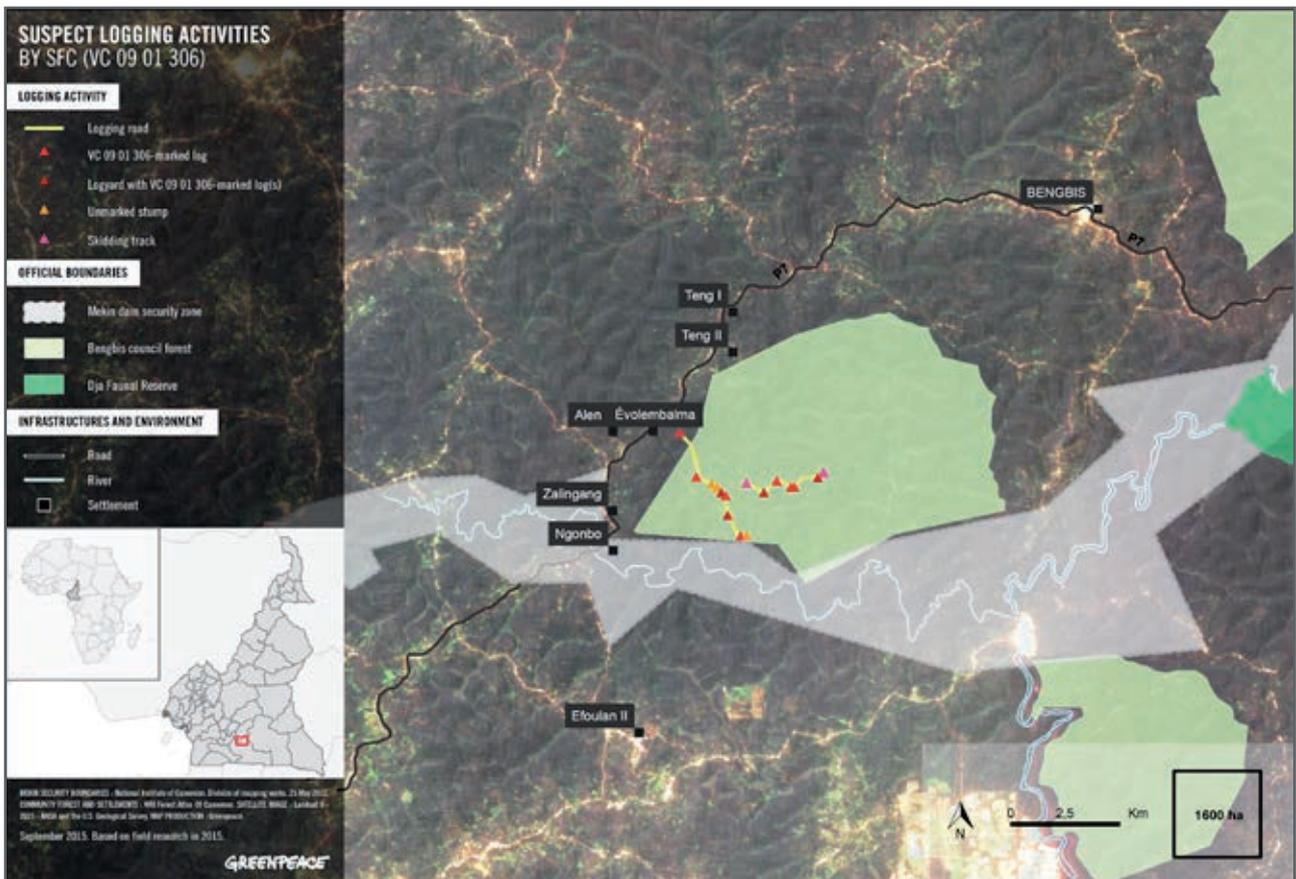
reservoir. However, field investigations by the Centre pour l'Environnement et le Développement (CED) in 2013 and by Greenpeace in 2014 and 2015 suggest that logging under VC 09 01 306 is taking place well beyond the inundation zone and in an area exceeding the 1,600 hectares granted.

Flooding rainforests in the periphery of a UNESCO World Heritage Site

The Mekin dam project entails the construction of a dam with a capacity of 940 million m³ water on the Dja river⁶¹. The project is steered by the state-owned Société Mekin Hydro-Electric Development Corporation (Hydro Mekin)⁶², created in 2010 to conceive, finance, construct and exploit the 12 Mw hydroelectric plant and a high voltage line⁶³. The China National Electric Engineering Co. (CNEEC) is currently constructing the dam⁶⁴.

The Mekin dam project is located in an area of dense tropical rainforest and borders the Dja Faunal Reserve (DFR)⁶⁵, a UNESCO World Heritage Site⁶⁶. In 2012, a joint mission by the World Heritage Center and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) considered that the Mekin dam project and its exploitation will directly affect the ecological functioning of the DFR in the form of flooding as well as facilitation of access,

Map: suspect logging activities by SFC (VC 09 01 306)



Suspect logging activities by SFC: abandoned log with VC 09 01 306-mark in the forest of Teng at 3°19'34.3" N, 12°19'25.4" E



© Greenpeace

Suspect logging activities by SFC: unmarked tree stump in the forest of Teng 3°19'35.1" N, 12°19'28.9" E



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spontaneous installations, illegal forestry and agricultural activities, hunting, fishing and poaching⁶⁷. It concluded that the measures proposed in the environmental & social management plans attached to the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) are clearly insufficient to mitigate the negative environmental impacts of the project⁶⁸. Consequently, UNESCO's World Heritage Committee expressed its deep concern regarding the impacts of the Mekin Dam, alongside other threats, on the DFR, the consequences of which would significantly affect its Outstanding Universal Value and in particular its integrity. It warned that the DFR could be inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger⁶⁹, a sanction that has repeatedly been postponed⁷⁰.

The EIA of the Mekin dam project indicates that an area of 4,530 hectares will be flooded⁷¹, but the security zone of the dam – as described by the National Cartographic Institute – is not less than 27,339 hectares⁷².

The Mekin dam project: a wildcard for logging?

A 2013 field investigation by CED established that SFC had its logging operations in the forests of Ngonbo, Zouameyong, Zelingang and Alen. Local villagers also reported to CED that the company BUSCAM was operating in their forests, using VC number 09 01 306.

Subsequent field research by Greenpeace in 2014 and 2015 showed that SFC continued its logging operations in the forest of Évolembalma and Teng. Although the justification for granting VC 09 01 306 reportedly was forest clearance to make way for the Mekin dam project, all of these logging operations were located well outside the security zone of the dam, and thus likely also outside the inundation zone. Logs with VC 09 01 306-markings were found up to 3,5 km from the security zone.

The 2015 field investigation found numerous skidding tracks and abandoned logs marked with VC 09 01 306 in the forest of Évolembalma and Teng. No delimitation marks were witnessed and verification of several skidding tracks led to unmarked tree stumps, an indication that SFC may be trying to obscure its logging activities.

Moreover, the logging took place inside an area proposed as a Council Forest since May 2012⁷³ and officially recognized as such since April 2015⁷⁴. No company is allowed to log without the agreement of the Council.

Comparing an area of 1,600 hectares – as represented by the square in the lower right of the map – with the actual extent of SFC's logging operations also leads to serious suspicion that the company has exceeded the area covered by VC 09 01 306.

Conclusion

These elements strongly suggest inappropriate exploitation of a VC, possibly for illegal logging operations, in the arrondissement of Bengbis and require an urgent investigation. Greenpeace insists that the MINFOF publishes the details and maps of all forestry titles granted and inspects the logging activities of SFC and other companies in the Mekin Dam Project area.

**CASE STUDY:
KIEFFER & CIE: ONE OF CCT'S MAIN
TRADING PARTNERS**

Company name: Kieffer & cie
Postal address: BP 669, Douala, Cameroon

In 2014, the logging company Kieffer & cie was one of CCT's main trading partners, trading logs from VVC 07 03 70⁷⁵. VC 07 03 70, located in Pouma, was granted to Kieffer & cie on 16 May 2011. It was still listed on the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife's (MINFOF) July 2014 list⁷⁶ but the permit does not occur anymore on more recent lists of active logging titles. MINFOF's March 2015 list of allocated titles indicates that VC 07 03 301 (in Dizangue) was allocated to Kieffer & cie on 01/01/2015⁷⁷. In August 2015, MINFOF announced that six more VCs (07 02 83, 08 08 222, 10 01 227, 10 02 235, 11 02 18 and 11 02 19) had been awarded to Kieffer & cie⁷⁸.

The maps of VC 07 03 70 and VC 07 03 701 are not available on the WRI/Global Forest Watch website making independent civil society monitoring of these logging operations very difficult⁷⁹.

CCT & Kieffer: old business friends

Kieffer has been linked to illegal logging practices and the business connections between CCT and Kieffer seem to date back many years.

Over the 1st quarter of 2009, Kieffer became the n^o1 exporter of timber. Following various complaints about illegal logging, Resources Extraction Monitoring (REM), the Independent Observer at the time, organized a field inspection in May 2009 to check Kieffer's logging practices in VC 07 03 62 (Édéa, Littoral region). While the mission could not detect any recent logging activity inside the VC, more in-depth investigation of the company's operating documents and statements from the PSRF⁸⁰ checkpoints (located at the entry of the port of Douala) revealed that Kieffer & cie was trading illegally harvested wood under the cover of their VC title. REM documented large scale illegal exploitation by KIEFFER & cie six kilometers outside the boundaries of the VC⁸¹.

In another 2009 report REM revealed that Kieffer & cie had timber- yard inside the CCT compound at Bonabéri in Douala but that a formal inspection into that area was refused despite the insistence to do so by the IM⁸². According to REM, this incident highlighted once more the problems of objectivity and neutrality during official forestry inspections⁸³. REM suggested that companies such as Kieffer & cie appear untouchable and are exempted of all controls⁸⁴. The IM recommended the launch of a formal investigation into the nature and the legality of the partnership between CCT and the company Kieffer & cie in order to reduce the risk of fraud and laundering⁸⁵.

In its final report REM flagged that Kieffer's illegal logging operation was one of the most significant cases of illegal logging, fraud and trafficking of timber for export they had documented in the entire project period. According to REM; the trafficking of illegal wood was organized under the cover of Kieffer & cie by CCT. REM recommended to the MINFOF to conduct additional field investigations to further document the scale of Kieffer & cie illegal logging operations, but those recommendations fell on deaf ears. The IM-FLEG presented the case as a typical case of bad governance with blockages at the highest level that would seem to confirm the severity of the case. According to REM, the Kieffer case illustrates the difficulties that Independent Observer bodies can face when important political and economic issues are at stake⁸⁶.

**CASE STUDY:
SOFOCAM (VC 07 03 71)**

Company name: Société Forestière du Cameroun (SOFOCAM)
Postal address: B.P. 4751 Douala, Cameroon

The Cameroon Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife (MINFOF)'s March 2015 list of granted titles lists 2 VC logging titles for SOFOCAM⁸⁷:

VC 07 03 71, granted on 2 April 2013
(1,805 hectares, Ngwei)
VC 07 02 77, granted on 23 October 2014
(2,486 hectares, Yabassi)

In July 2015, SOFOCAM won the auction for an additional VC, 07 02 84 (2,500 hectares)⁸⁸.

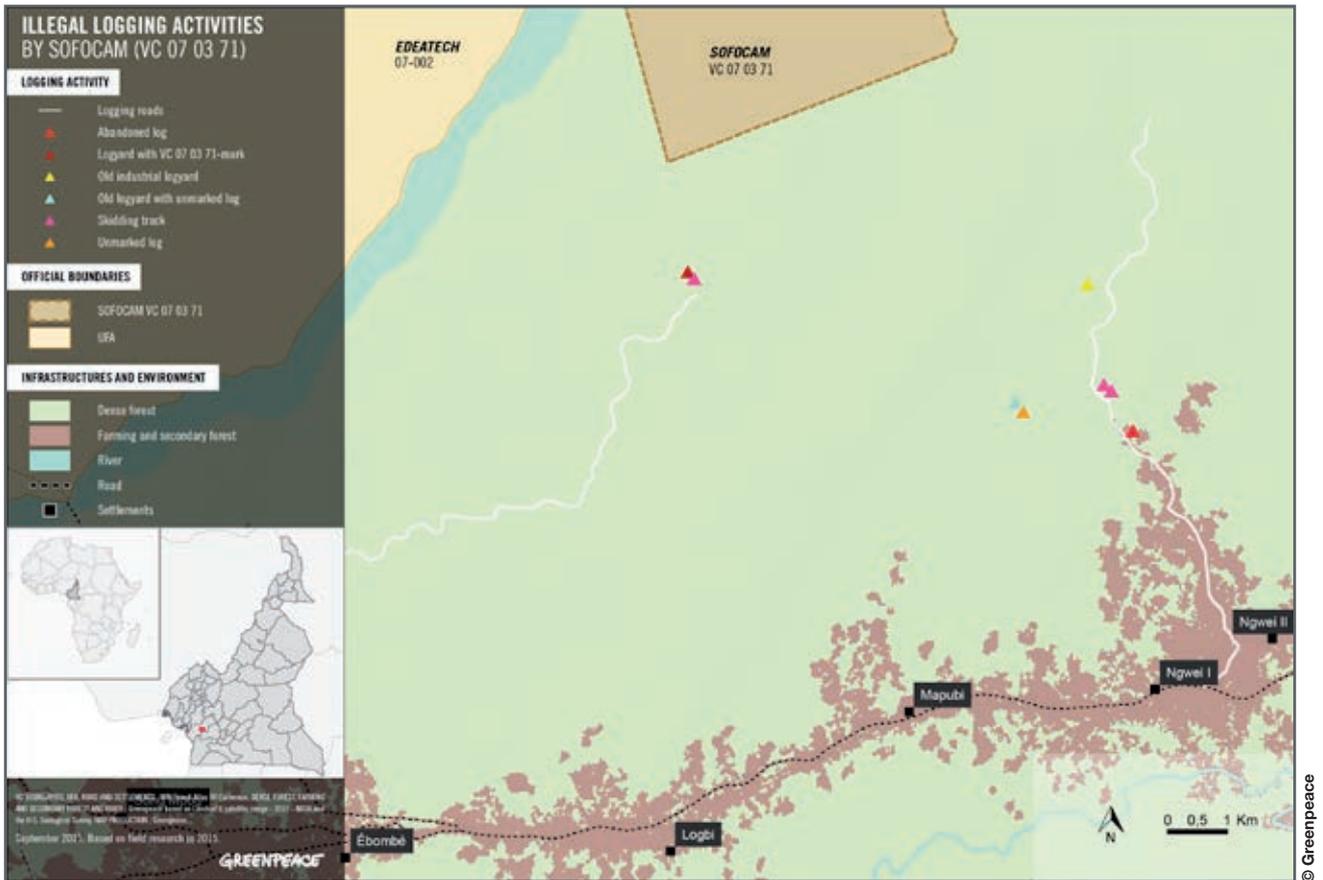
Previous complaints

SOFOCAM has previously been criticized for alleged illegal logging activities. An August 2012 report by the Independent Observer to Cameroon's forestry sector quotes from a March 2012 complaint letter by local people to the MINFOF about SOFOCAM. The complaint stated that SOFOCAM had a VC (VC 08 08 200) in the *arrondissement* of Matomb but that the company has been stealing wood in the villages of Ngong and Kellé. According to the local complaint, the company focused on the logging of Bubinga, a very valuable wood species which is in high demand in China, and bribed certain individuals within the community instead of organizing a proper community consultation⁸⁹.

Ongoing illegal activities

VC 07 03 71 is located in the *arrondissement* of Ngwei, Littoral region in Cameroon. A Greenpeace investigation in 2015 found evidence of logging activity by SOFOCAM outside the boundaries of this VC.

Map: out-of-boundary logging by SOFOCAM (VC 07 03 71)"]



According to local officials as well as villagers, SOFOCAM was the only operational company in Ngwei forest. The MINFOF's March 2015 list mentions another title, VC 07 03 76, which was granted in the Ngwei area on 23 February 2015 to the company Ets. Eloungo Toua⁹⁰, but this company was reportedly not active in the forest of Ngwei at the time of SOFOCAM's logging in 2014.

Local people interviewed during the field research, informed Greenpeace that SOFOCAM has been using a logging road starting from Ngwei I village towards the VC to conduct out of boundary logging activity.

A former SOFOCAM employee reported that SOFOCAM organized industrial logging in 2013-2014 in an area of forest that is approximately 6-7 km away from its VC, before logging started inside the VC. The employee reported the use of heavy machinery (bulldozers) and the presence of large log parks.

Greenpeace documented extensive logging along the logging roads and skidding tracks in this area. Many abandoned timber parks and abandoned but unmarked logs were observed. Dense vegetation on and along the logging road, indicated that the 4 kilometers closest to the VC had not been used by heavy machinery since several

months. But still, according to ex-loggers and interviewed villagers, SOFOCAM continued entering this road for timber extraction.

Ex-loggers that worked for SOFOCAM reported that the company contacted local villagers for work in 2013 and 2014. Each villager got CFA 1,000 per logged tree, and on average they could log 5 trees a day. SOFOCAM reportedly contracted 10-15 loggers a day.

Along this same road, potential illegal logging activities were reported via the real time forest monitoring system of UK Rainforest Foundation and Forêts et Développement Rural (FODER). However, the information did not indicate whether or not those activities were linked to SOFOCAM.

SOFOCAM has also been seen using another exploitation road towards its VC which passes and enters the SOCAPALM palm oil plantation in the *arrondissement* of Ngwei. There are also indications of SOFOCAM disorderly and illegally logging along this road in an area that is more than two kilometers removed from its VC boundaries. Many tire tracks in directions away from the VC and a log yard were documented. The logs in the yard were marked with VC 07 03 71 and marked with logging dates

Illegal logging activities by SOFOCAM: log with VC 07 03 71-mark in an active log yard at UTM 32N 0652760, 0431239, approximately 1.5 km from VC 07 03 71



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Illegal logging activities by SOFOCAM: VC 07 03 71-marked logs at active logging park (UTM 32N 0652761 0431238)



© Greenpeace

from March 2015. Timber trucks were observed that were evacuating the logs.

Out-of-boundary logging is punishable by a fine of CFA 200,000 (about EUR 300) to CFA 1 million (about EUR 1,500) and/or a 1-6 month prison term⁹¹. Violations of the Forestry Law may result in suspension, or, for repeated violations, cancellation of title or logging license⁹².

5. CCT TRADING HIGH RISK WOOD ONTO THE INTERNATIONAL MARKET

Preliminary Greenpeace investigations revealed that timber from CCT can be found in several EU countries

BELGIUM

According to Greenpeace information⁹³, CCT sawn timber in Belgium can be linked to five companies: Callens, Firma CRAS N.V., Decolvenaere N.V., Vandecasteele Houtimport; and Group Thys.

NETHERLANDS

According to Greenpeace information⁹⁴, CCT sawn timber has been spotted in the Netherlands on the premises of at least seven companies: Hupkes Houthandel, Felix Clercx, Global Wood Import, HC de Goederen, LTL Woodproducts, Hoogendoorn Hout and Van Der Stadt.

SPAIN

According to Greenpeace information, CCT sawn timber is traded in Spain by at least two companies: Maderas Rias Baixas S.L. and Maderas Medina S.L.

As it appears from Greenpeace investigation, CCT is exporting logs and sawn wood to Europe that comes, at least partly, from companies involved in illegal harvesting.

Taking into account Cameroon's general problems related to bad governance, corruption, limited legal compliance and lack of credible independent monitoring, there is a high risk that timber exported from Cameroon is illegally harvested.

As mentioned above, pursuant to the EU Timber regulations, the placing on the market of illegally harvested timber or timber products derived from such timber shall be prohibited (Art. 4). The companies placing CCT timber on the market shall exercise due diligence so that risk assessment concludes negligible risk of illegality. If not, mitigation measure must be taken. If those measures are not sufficient, the timber cannot be placed on the market.

Knowing the high level of risk associated with CCT timber, Greenpeace express concerns about exercise of due diligence by importing companies (operators). Proper due diligence may be in fact impossible in the absence of systematic field checks into the V C operations where CCT is sourcing its timber from.

Greenpeace therefore urges that the following measures are taken:

- For competent authorities in Belgium and the Netherlands: investigate operators that are trading CCT timber on the internal market and carry out checks to verify whether the companies identified as operators in the case at issue:
 - (i) have a due diligence system in place, and
 - (ii) have correctly carried out such due diligence so as to comply with the requirements set out in Articles 4 and 6 EUTR.
- In case a failure to comply with the due diligence requirements is ascertained, we urge the competent authorities to fine the operators in accordance with Article 19 EUTR and the other relevant EU and national law provisions.
- For operators in Europe: consider all Cameroon wood as "high risk" in the context of the EUTR's due diligence obligation and cancel all contracts with CCT until it is possible to check legality of that wood in a reliable manner.
- For the government of Spain: Immediately comply with its obligations under EU laws and implement the EUTR.

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